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KILL-ZONE-SUMOTORI

**NINJA
SLAYER**
NEO-SAITAMA
IN FLAMES

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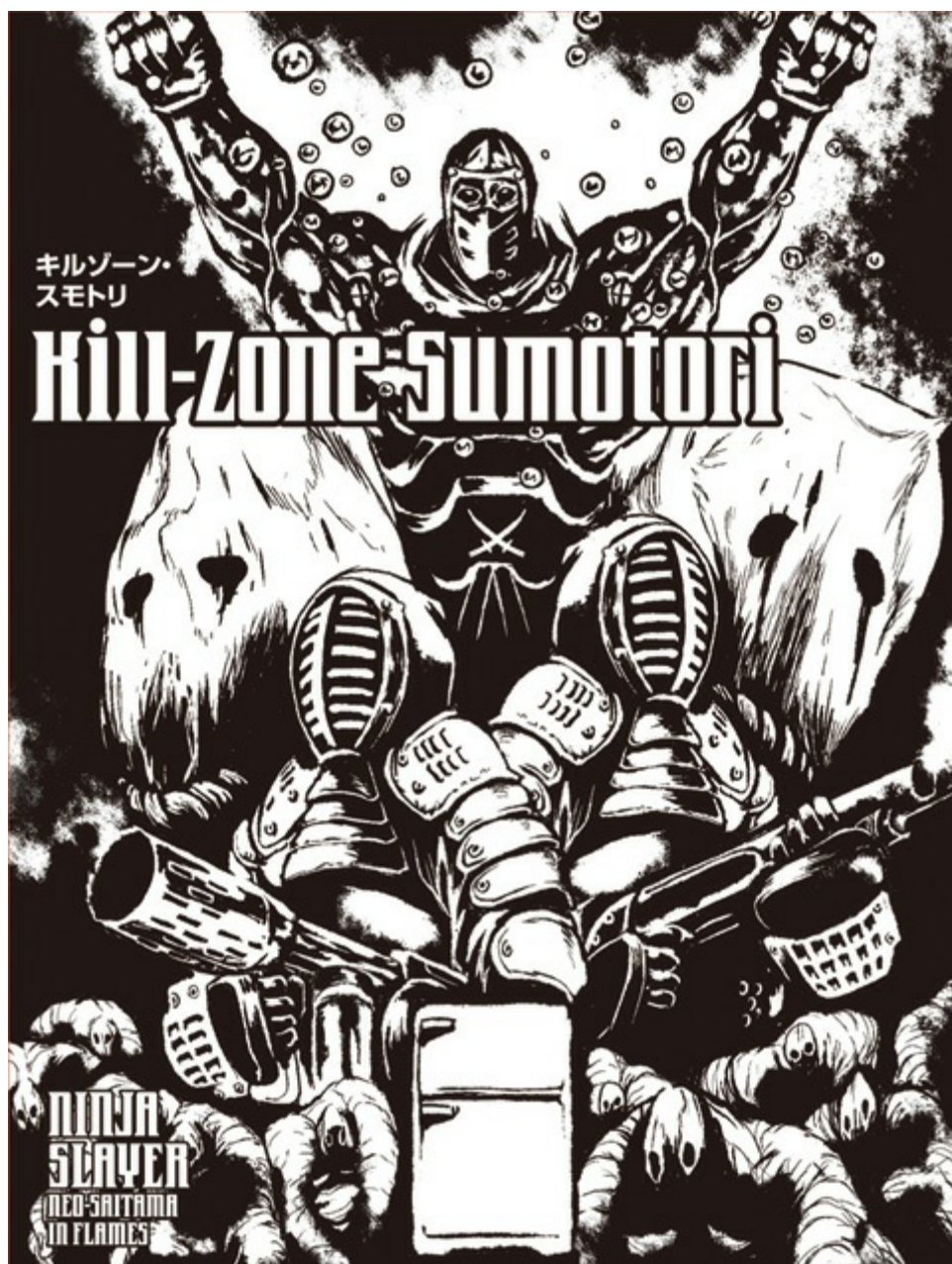
Ninja Slayer - Volume 02 - Killzone Sumotori

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Chapter 01

NINJA SLAYER



by BRADLEY BOND + PHILIP Ninj@ MORZEZ

Chapter 01

In a dimly lit multi-storey car park in an abandoned commercial complex of the “Kokeshi Mall”, two men dressed in kendo style armor stalk forward covering each other’s back. One of them wields a shotgun while the other brandishes a small flamethrower. The scope light affixed to the gun barrel pierces the darkness and relentlessly searches for prey.

BOOM-BOOM-BOOM. BOOM-BOOM-BOOM. The humdrum electric monotone bass from the telltale Kokeshi Mart music mixed with scratchy static blares from the speakers in the parking lot. Cold, inorganic light from Neo-Saitama spills in as emergency alarm bells affixed to the pillars and walls along with 90 percent of the busted fluorescent lights flicker to illuminate signs that read: 『二十七階』 27th Floor 『ショウギ中心』 Shougi Center 『実際安い』 Actually Cheap.

#KOKESHI:NAGAMU: Located the squid.

#KOKESHI:SATOU: Where?

#KOKESHI:NAGAMU: Next to the junked yellow car.

#KOKESHI:SATOU: Wanna fry it up?

#KOKESHI:NAGAMU: Roger. Light him up.

Text letters projected in a fluorescent dayglow green font materialize on their bio-retina display. From the latest in cybernetic surgery, a wireless LAN terminal complete with IRC messaging client capabilities has been implanted into their brains. Consequently, communication is possible without the need to speak or tap a keyboard.

#KOKESHI:SATOU: Approaching the squid. Gonna fry it up.

#KOKESHI:NAGAMU: Roger. Light him up.

A man called Satou-san pulls the trigger on his flamethrower and spews a stream of fire at one of the parking spaces. As the fiery blaze coruscates the healthy jumbo squid in the parking space, its body curls up into the size of a small motorcycle giving off a spicy smell.

#KOKESHI:NAGAMU: Good cookin’. Smells savory.

#KOKESHI:SATOU: That should bring a hungry sumotori our way.

#KOKESHI:NAGAMU: What's the score for today?

#KOKESHI:SATOU: I got six to your four, Nagamu-san. You're on point.

#KOKESHI:NAGAMU: You sure?

#KOKESHI:SATOU: Sure, I'm sure. Camaraderie!

#KOKESHI:NAGAMU: Camaraderie!

CRAAAASH! Suddenly, the clamor of breaking glass reverberates through the underground parking lot. Then, painful groaning and heavy breathing are heard. Stepping back from the squid, the two men hunker down in the shadows behind a black van. Nagamu dismantles one of the magnetic lights on his gun shining it in the vicinity of the fried squid. The two men sense another presence getting closer.

Amidst the darkness an almost two meter tall, stark-naked giant sumo wrestler suddenly emerges; it's a huge, feral bio-sumotori! Nagamu illuminates its smooth white skin as white as a corpse with his light. Maybe it was the sumotori's last remaining bit of decency that made him do it, but he now wears a brown paper bag from Kokeshi Mart over his head to hide his shame.

Despite knowing deep in his blubbery gut that the fried squid is a trap, the famished bio-sumotori cannot fight off his urge for mouthwatering aroma of the finger lickin' good fried squid. Dropping to his knees, he slides one of the beautifully brown sautéed legs through the paper bag and chomps down. Watching this sicko sacrilege scene as an observer makes you feel hideously nauseated almost grotesque.

#KOKESHI:NAGAMU: Yeeart!

Scrambling up to the top of the van, Nagamu aims his shotgun at the sumotori's head and fires. His aim is slightly off as countless black shot pellets stoccado the sumotori's porcelain skin. The foul stench of burning flesh shrouds the scene. Green bile bio-extract gushes to the ground.

"Aiieee!" The sumotori plaintively cried. Nagamu cocks his shotgun and opens fire. The sizzling buckshot relentlessly rains down on the sumotori's face scorching the paper bag that covers it.

"Aiieee!" The sumotori moans in agony thus ending his bio-life. Nagamu

pounces down from the hood of the van and nimbly slices off the sumotori's ears with a ceramic knife as if he's done it before. He places the ears in a container with preservation solution that was hanging from the waist of his kendo armor. The score is now six to six. All tied up.

#KOKESHI:SATOU: Camaraderie!

#KOKESHI:NAGAMU: Camaraderie!

The two men are back on the hunt using amazing teamwork as they proceed in silence. These so-called kachigumi salarymen are winners of working world; high-class citizens that represent the top five percent of the population. When they are not working, they like to relax at Killzone Sumotori, a dangerous hunting playground set up for their leisure in an unpopulated area near the Kokeshi Mall.

All kachigumi salarymen place a high value on social and organizational harmony in the workplace. In competitive situations like this, they must be mindful of keeping an even score with each other. If by some chance, for example, the score is ten to one, the employee who scored ten would be ostracized in the office and in cyberspace as well. This kind of murahachi ostracism is a cruel but necessary form of insidious social lynching.

#KOKESHI:SATOU: That was a good work out, huh?

#KOKESHI:NAGAMU: Yes. Shall we go?

#KOKESHI:SATOU: Sure. Let's go.

#KOKESHI:NAGAMU: Besides, tomorrow is a work day, you know.

The words they exchange are always excessively polite. But the reason is not because that is how life is in the kachigumi social structure. The reason is because all IRC communications are monitored in Neo-Saitama.

When careless, offensive remarks are made, regardless of the situation, a complaint is lodged to the cyber police where the account is frozen and penalty charges are incurred. In the worst case, penalties like incarceration and expulsion from society are imposed.

As the two kachigumi depart Killzone Sumotori and head for the elevator, they quickly board the elevator before a new sumotori can come their way. But Nagamu-san had overdosed on several Barike drinks which blurred his field of vision. While he meant to push the button for the first floor, he mistakenly

pressed the 13th underground floor button.

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As the elevator headed for the 13th underground floor, like an unexpected dream, the two kachigumi salarymen praised each other on today's hunting results via IRC.

#KOKESHI:SATOU: If we sell the ears we bagged today, we should get about 2 million yen, you think?

#KOKESHI:NAGAMU: Correct. That should upgrade the CPU clock in our implants as well.

#KOKESHI:SATOU: You've gotten used to killing sumotori quite well.

#KOKESHI:NAGAMU: You could say that. I don't feel mercy. Bio-sumotori are harmful beasts that have overpopulated themselves.

The Kokeshi seventh commercial district was once a place where middle class citizens used to hustle and bustle. But since the bio-sumotori cultivation plant -- a joint development project between Yoroshisan Pharmaceuticals and Omura Industries -- exploded in an accident, the area was designated as no-man's-land under government decree. The citizens were allotted new housing complexes and were evicted by force.

The large number of feral bio-sumotori who escaped the factory were set loose in all parts of the seventh commercial district and they ate everything edible, especially rice, in sight. After that, Yoroshisan Pharmaceuticals and Omura Industries concocted the novel idea to convert this biohazard district into a massive game range for the well-to-do upper class thus putting this idea into action.

Of course, their plans like all marching orders of mega-corporations were carried out behind a veil of secrecy. No matter how much you search cyberspace for information linking these two corporations to the bio-sumotori, you will find nothing, not even a hit. While some journalists took an interest in the explosion, all of them were "dealt" with via Soukaiya agents.

In addition, the seventh commercial district currently solicits volunteers for bio-sumotori “conservation” and operates under the following pretext: in exchange for the ears of hunted sumotori, the government will pay a healthy bounty. This way the game participants not only get kill for pleasure but also get to satisfy their egos through the actions of contributing to society and the environment.

As our two ecological heroes ride the service elevator headed towards the depths of the 13th underground floor at the Kokeshi Mart, they arrive with a slam. Maybe the elevator wires were decrepit, who knows. As the iron cage shakes violently, sparks fly from the green panel that displays the floor buttons.

#KOKESHI:SATOU: Oops! Is this the 13th basement floor? Didn't you push the first floor button?

#KOKESHI:NAGAMU: Maybe the elevator is broken. Shall I send an IRC rescue message to base camp?

#KOKESHI:SATOU: ...But the penalty charges will be high if we do that.

#KOKESHI:NAGAMU: Then let's try and work it out on our own.

The elevator is completely out of order; no matter what button they push, it won't move. The door opens and closes halfway over and over again. These two sure as hell don't need being-trapped-in-an-elevator on their permanent records. So they decide to venture into uncharted territory, a place they have never stepped foot, a place called the Level 5 Contamination Area. They begin their quest on the 13th underground floor in the Kokeshi Mall.

BOOM-BOOM-BOOM. BOOM-BOOM-BOOM. “Cheap, cheap, actually cheap.” The all-too-familiar Kokeshi Mart theme song lyrics mixed with the monotone bass uncannily reverberates. While the thrill is still there, the fear is gone. If everything else fails, all they need to do is sent a rescue message to the management.

As these two warriors dressed in kendo style armor exit the elevator, the feeling of cold air greets them. Rotten mold that smells like cheese reeks from the floor. As they brighten the area with the maglites on their weapons, they figure out that this area of the Kokeshi Mart was once used as storage for perishables.

Amongst the endless tombstone-esque line of silver commercial refrigerators, banners hang down that promote rhetorical flourish catchphrases like “100% Domestic Bio-Wagyu Beef” and “Simply Delicious”. A rail for holding a slaughter winch runs along the ceiling at an angle with yellow and black stripes on either side. The floor is stained in several places from non-descript bio-organisms.

Moving forward a bit, a red lacquered fence between each of the cold storage chambers bars their way. Yellowed paper carrying a warning notice handwritten with a shodo calligraphy brush has been glued to one of the shelves.

#KOKESHI:SATOU: Look at that.

#KOKESHI:NAGAMU: Authorized personal only?

#KOKESHI:SATOU: What do you reckon?

#KOKESHI:NAGAMU: Probably left over from when this place was operational.

Our two heroes kick in the fence setting forth into the silver maze hoping to find the emergency stairs. While guarding each other as they move between the cramped ravine of refrigerators, they proceed ever so carefully. Satou-san walks point with his flamethrower while Nagamu and his shotgun protects the rear. Their camaraderie is perfection in motion. No matter where the enemy might attack from, they can handle it. But just then...

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Chapter 03

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ARRGH! Suddenly, one of the cold storage chambers behind them opens. A pure white fleshy mass with its face covered in a paper bag lets out a sumoesque scream. It's a bio-sumotori. Clumsily swings his arms around like the bio-version of Ian Curtis from Joy Division, he bitch slaps his cheeks. ARRGH! This low intellect struggles to speak and probably cannot.

#KOKESHI:NAGAMU: Pop Sumotori 1.

#KOKESHI:SATOU: RGR.

Nagamu-san crouches down to protect the rear. He pulls the trigger on his shotgun while standing on one knee. Satou-san follows suit turning to the rear as he lets his flamethrower blaze firing over Nagamu-san's head. They IRC message at the same time. The message reads: Camaraderie!

"Aieeeee!" Met with fury of fire and hot lead, the surprised sumotori pathetically yelps and scrunches over. The ever-relentless blast of firepower turns the bio-sumotori's body into a black fleshy mass like a well-done 100% Domestic Bio-Wagyu Beef steak. Once again, the 13th underground floor is ruled by a monotonic bass bellow.

While cutting off the well-done flamethrower fried ears, the kachigumi salarymen think almost the exact thing. Maybe this place is the bio-sumotori nest that they'd heard rumors about. Gaining Nagamu-san's back up, Satou-san unlocked the next cold storage unit that had "*Mystery Wagyu*" written on it.

Oh, Namu-Amida-Butsu...Oh my Buddha! What a sweet fall from virtue! Inside several bio-sumotori packed tight like commuters on a train with their backs and stomachs against each other face the same direction. Amid the cold air, you can see their breath as they sleep so peacefully leaning against one another.

This must be the bonus stage. Deep behind the iron grill of their kendo helmets, the eyes of the beast hunters glare with desire. The two kachigumi salarymen are in high and proud spirits yet take to the task of massacring very

businesslike. They simply lodge a few grenades hanging from their waist into the storage unit and close the door shut.

Three, two, one, zero. Then the muffled roar of an explosion. Nice cookin'! The screams of the sleeping bio-sumotori seeping out from the Koma Beef cold storage unit soon went unheard. Then a bit later, green bile bio-extract leaks out and glows dimly like lightening bugs before turning dark red.

The kachigumi open the door to the cooler and have a field day harvesting the ears from the dead bodies. What a wonderful place they had found! As they surveyed the area, they could see thousands of massive refrigerators. And if all of them were packed to the brim with sumotori, their bounty would be a mother load and *assure them the top score*. And what a fine service to society they would be doing by eliminating these beasts from the seventh commercial district.

...But just then, red warning lamps all over the underground area activate. A buzzing squawk like an emergency warning drowns out the Kokeshi Mart theme song. Perhaps they violated some kind of rule. Was that really a no-access fence for authorized personnel only? The two kachigumi soon lose their carnivore fury and start panicking like small animals before a lightening storm.

#KOKESHI:NAGAMU: Satou-san, maybe we should find the emergency stairs and get out of here fast.

#KOKESHI:SATOU: Pop ninja 1.

#KOKESHI:NAGAMU: Ninja?

Nagamu-san gazed steadily in the direction that Satou-san was pointing the barrel of his flamethrower. Sure as the rain is polluted by heavy metal, it was a ninja. Standing between the massive cold storage refrigerators that formed an inorganic silver corridor, the ninja dressed in black turned toward them and swaggered over. Satou-san was right. No doubt about it; a ninja. But why would a ninja be here?

#KOKESHI:NAGAMU: What should we do? He's getting closer.

#KOKESHI:SATOU: He's not a sumotori doing ninja cosplay, right?

#KOKESHI:NAGAMU: Right. Probably against the law to exterminate him, right?

#KOKESHI:SATOU: But he's scary. How about we let him have it?

Satou-san lightly squeezed the trigger on his flamethrower and flashed his menace of firepower as if to say, "Please don't come any closer." Then, the ninja stopped in his tracks about ten meters away. Right after the two kachigumi sighed with relief, the ninja cracked his arm back like a whip and threw suriken at them.

"Yeeart!"

Finding an opening in the iron grill of the kendo helmet, two suriken pierce both of Satou-san's eyes.

"Aieeee!" The barrel of his flamethrower deviates. The severe pain sends Satou-san back bumping into Nagumu-san who was providing backup and diverts the barrel of his shotgun.

Clad in a black suit, the ninja doesn't miss a beat. Bridging the ten-meter gap in a flash, he pins both of Satou-san's arms. With unbelievable superhuman strength, he clamps down on the man's wrists like a steel vise. The specially fabricated heat-resistant, stab-proof kendo gauntlets are powerless against the hammer-and-tongs pressure of the ninja's grasp.

Satou-san resists and tries making full use of his state-of-the-art kendo armor. Like a capstan lifting a battleship anchor, the ninja's grip strength grew second by second. Even if Nagamu-san wanted to provide cover fire, he couldn't. The gap was too small and risked Satou-san being caught in friendly fire.

Then, the ninja grabs hold with both hands. Like a lamb to the slaughter, the ninja crushes the kendo gloves along with Satou-san's flesh and bones like a tomato.

"Aieeeeeeeee!" Satou-san's screaming echoed. Both his hands holding the flamethrower get torn to pieces and roll on the moldy floor as the gushing blood hemorrhages.

Clutching Satou-san's neck and raising it up, in no time, the ninja tightens his grip with incredible force. This time, in less than three seconds, Satou-san's eyeballs along with a thick stream of blood spill through the opening of his Kendo mask. Overcome by fear, Nagumu-san is unable to stand up and falls over on his rear end.

Like a tuna hung out to dry for dashi, Satou-san doesn't move a single muscle. The ninja soon tosses him behind and gazes down at this next prey. The ninja's

eyes are black like those of stallion with an ominous luster like an aubergine grown in Satan's garden.

"Who are you? You killed Satou-san; the vice assistant manager of the Uttoko Construction Group Inc. Co. Ltd! I just sent a rescue message. You won't get away with this. Our team of hotshot lawyers will surround you. We are on intimate terms with a yakuza clan!" Nagamu-san shouted any and all threats that came to his mind.

"Domo. Nagamu-san, pleased to make your acquaintance. I'm Iron Vise." The ninja was unexpectedly cordial yet bowed as if to mock his powerless opponent. "You two broke the rules. Your death will help you take responsibility for your mistake. And as for Uttoko Construction, compared to the assets backing my group, they don't amount to a tick on a dog's back."

And he was not lying. Iron Vise is affiliated with the Soukai Syndicate who has a "cooperative" relationship with Yoroshisan Pharmaceuticals and Omura Industries, two massive underworld mega-corporations that have the Japanese government under their thumb. But a mere salaryman like Nagamu-san would know nothing about their dark truth.

Still unable to stand up from the fear, Nagamu thought, "Who gives a shit if you're a ninja or whatever? I'm an elite kachigumi. If I kill him, I can go home." He resolutely pulled the trigger to his shotgun.

"Yeeart!" Namu-Amida-Butsu...Oh my Buddha! At such a close range, the countless shower of buckshot should have blown the ninja to smithereens. Or so he thought.

But a second before the buckshot cascaded out the barrel, the ninja, with his arms crossed over his chest, let out a karate shout before using his dreaded jujitsu.

"Yeeart!"

In that instant, Iron Vise hardened up his entire body like steel easily reflecting the buckshot. This was muteki attitude, one of the jujitsu techniques propagated in the age of ninja tranquility, in all its glory. The strange out of place cacophony of buckshot hitting the metal refrigerators echoed down the corridor.

Nagamu-san cocked his gauge and fired again.

“Yeeart!” By the same token, Iron Vise showed his muteki attitude again.

“Yeeart!” He flicked the bullets away like raindrops.

Out of ammo and in deperation, Nagumu-san had nothing left to do but shit his pants.

“Game over!” Iron Vise zeroed in on the man with his grip.

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Chapter 04

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WASSHOI! All of sudden, the door to the refrigerator behind Iron Vise swung open. Another ninja dressed in a dark red suit sprang out like a cannonball. While spinning around like a drill boring a hole, he leaps in front of one refrigerator and then jumps on top of another one on the opposite side. Finally, the ninja lands on the floor and performs five backward summersaults.

“Domo. Iron Vise-san. Pleased to make your acquaintance. I’m Ninja Slayer.” After landing his final summersault, this new ninja stands at attention as he goes through the aisatsu ritual. “Well, I guess the intel about this distasteful killing zone being a cash cow of the Soukai Syndicate was right. Ninja shall perish. Your time for dying has come.”

In no time, the two ninja went into attack mode. Nagamu-san happenstantially made a narrow escape. Why had these ninja shown up at Killzone Sumotori? Why were they fighting each other? Nagamu couldn’t comprehend the least. All he knew is that he was no longer the target.

Satou-san must surely be dead; his IRC won’t respond. Using the shotgun as a cane, Nagamu-san got to his feet and backtracked fumbling his way through the silver maze of refrigerators lit by the emergency lamps. Pushing through the stench of death, he entered a sideway and hide in place out of sight from the ninja.

“Yeeart!”

“Yeeart!”

“Yeeart!”

“Aaaargh!?” Fearsome ninja shouts echo from not too far away.

Nagamu-san thought as if praying to a higher power, “There’s got to be a safer place.”

He opened a refrigerator door marked “sliced shrimp”

He found more deep-frozen bio-sumotori jam packed inside. But luck was on his side, he found an opening in the center between them big enough for a

salaryman wearing kendo armor. After all, self-preservation is the first law of nature. Nagamu-san made up his mind cramming between the back of one sumotori and the stomach of yet another and then closed the door.

Off in the distance, the smackdown mortal combat between Ninja Slayer and Iron Vise raged on.

“Yeeart!” Ninja Slayer ripped off two suriken in succession.

“Yeeart!” Using his muteki attitude, Iron Vise hardened his body like steel and repelled the attack. Fight fire with fire!

If that’s the case then, sure, a chop to the neck might be better than a suriken is what you might be thinking. But Ninja Slayer had analyzed the battle between the kachigumi and Iron Vise very carefully. He knew that this Soukaiya ninja was concealing his dangerous grip strength; therefore, he must be mindful of short range grappling moves.

“Yeeart!”

“Yeeart!” Ninja Slayer’s suriken attacks cannot breakthrough the muteki attitude defense.

“Yeeart!”

“Yeeart!” The suriken get rejected one after the other.

“Yeeart!”

“Yeeart!” At this rate, he’ll make no progress. Realizing this, Fujikido Kenji made a new move.

“Yeeart!” First, he threw a suriken.

“Yeeart!” Iron Vise turned his body to steel again.

“Yeeart!” Then he threw another suriken.

“Yeeart!” Iron Vise defended himself in the same manner again.

But while turned to steel, Iron Vise cannot move for one instant. So if that’s the case, how about throwing suriken even faster?

The first teachings of Ninja Slayer’s instructor Master Dragon Gendoso-sensei echoed in the neurons of his brain.

“Fight fire with fire? One cannot. Make up your mind to fight fire with speed and even deadlier speed you shall create. If the enemy doesn’t fall after a hundred suriken, throw a thousand.”

Ninja Slayer swung both his arms alternately around like a hellish pitching machine throwing a suriken every zero point five seconds.

“Yeeart!” Throw!

“Yeeart!” Muteki attitude defense.

“Yeeart!” Throw!

“Yeeart!” Muteki attitude defense.

“Yeeart!” Throw!

“Yeeart!” Muteki attitude defense.

“Yeeart!” Throw!

“Yeeart?” Muteki attitude defense.

With no time to undo his steel defense, Iron Vise realizes that he can’t move. But it’s too late. Ninja Slayer, who advanced while throwing his suriken, arrives directly horizontal to this enemy. While throwing the final suriken, he follows up with a right-handed karate chop which immediately struck his neck.

“Yeeart!”

“Aaaargh!” Iron Vise continues his steel defense some more but Ninja Slayer’s karate does not stop. Bit by bit, lethal fissures open up in his steel neck, just like a trembling Lenin statue whose legs are being chipped away by revolutionaries wielding mattocks.

“Stop it, Ninja Slayer-san! Let me meet your demands!”

“No mercy.” Ninja Slayer speeds up and lets out karate chops with incredible speed almost leaving afterimages.

“Yyyeeart!”

“Aaaaaaargh!?” Along with screams of agony, finally, Iron Vise’s neck snapped.

“Sayonara!”

As his neck is severed, his technique fades and Iron Vise’s body turns back to flesh. While his blood spews like a fountain, he scattered everywhither till kingdom come. As the veil of blood clears, Ninja Slayer is nowhere to be found. He sets his wheels in motion. He must provide Nancy Lee with this conclusive information and exchanges ampoules to save the life of his master.

All that remains are Satou-san’s merciless body sleeping in a sea of bile bio-extract and the mangled minced meat of the bio-sumotori. By tomorrow, some researchers from Yoroshisan Pharmaceuticals will bring mops, remove the blood

strains from the ground and probably erase all the adverse evidence.

Nagamu-san, who was still hiding in the refrigerator between the cold sumotori meat, dozes off to sleep. Little by little, his consciousness fades. No matter how long he waits, no IRC message ever comes. The emergency buzzer stops ringing and the humdrum electric monotone bass background music echoes like a lullaby inside the refrigerator.

In a state of somato recall, his life flashes before him as an old childhood memory rushes around in the neurons of his brain. His poor mother drags him to a going out of business sale at another Kokeshi Mart. In the midst of heavy metal acid rain, the expressionless Kokeshi robots spin in vain at the mall's entrance and sing, "Cheap, cheap, actually cheap. We're practically giving it away." What a fine night it was.

He had escaped poverty and even sold his mother's organs. While he had finally climbed the ranks to kachigumi was it all going to end here at the Kokeshi Mart? Such irony. Amid his fading consciousness, Nagamu-san self-deprecatingly mutters to himself. Oh, it doesn't matter anymore. At any rate, even if he made it back to the company, thanks to his error, he had fallen from grace and the promotion course.

Wrapped in his kendo armor, the sound of his mother singing a long-forgotten lullabye echoed in the back of our invincible ecological hero's mind. "Cheap, cheap, actually cheap. We're practically giving it away. Kokeshi, Kokeshi, Kokeshi Mart. Today and tomorrow. Kokeshi Mart. Cheap, cheap, actually cheap. We're practically giving it away."

Nagamu-san's mind shut down.

KILLZONE SUMOTORI - THE END

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